Mr Ritzel 211

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY:

Subject: General Factors Affecting the Establishment of the Middle East Command

PN
In connection with the general subject, I am sending Churchill & the British Embassy here the sections of the Middle East paper relating to the Anglo-Egyptian dispute upon which JF

On March 21 you asked me among other matters to make a thorough review of the problem of the Middle East Command with a view to determining what, if any, action this Government might take in connection either with the immediate question of the settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute or with the MEC problem in its broader aspects.

My preliminary studies and consultations lead me to certain conclusions which I am bringing to your attention at this time because I believe they are relevant to decisions on current issues before the Department.

In the negotiating paper prepared for the President's talks with Prime Minister Churchill (TCT D-4/2d, January 4, 1952), it is stated that at the present time the Middle East Command "is more a political problem than a military one and the United States seeks through the Middle East Command to gain active Middle Eastern cooperation with the West in the defense of the Middle East on a cooperative basis." In our approach to the Anglo-Egyptian problem we have also recognized that a friendly cooperative attitude on the part of Egypt is essential to the successful maintenance of a British base in the Canal Zone area; military power on the spot is not a substitute for local cooperation. In the "Analysis and Appraisal" of the Anglo-Egyptian dispute which you recently sent to Mr. Eden, it was stated:

> "It is understood that British military authorities have concluded that the base cannot be a satisfactory operative base without minimum Egyptian cooperation and assistance which is now lacking or without prohibitive costs in manpower and money."

Aside from the general considerations which lead to that conclusion, I believe it is supported by the contrast during World War II between, for example, British difficulties in meeting the Japanese attacks in Malaya and our own position in the Philippines and in the Panama Canal Zone.

One therefore

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One therefore approaches the question of the establishment of the MEC from the premise that an essential prerequisite is the development of a generally friendly atmosphere and a willingness to cooperate on the part of the states in the area. Specific steps looking toward the establishment of the MEC should be weighed with this basic premise in mind. The establishment of the MEC is not necessarily the prime objective of United States policy and cannot override all other considerations. Nevertheless, it is agreed that the Middle Eastern area is of very great importance and there seems to be no dissent from the proposition that the establishment of the MEC is the best possible course to be followed in an attempt to make sure that this strategic area will not be lost to the West. Accordingly, other actions by the United States which may have an effect upon the establishment of the MEC should be weighed in terms of these possible effects.

The problem of building a cooperative attitude on the part of the Middle Eastern states cannot be solved by any single step, particularly in terms of bilateral relations with any one of the Middle Eastern countries. Undoubtedly a solution of the Anglo-Egyptian problem would be a helpful factor of very great importance but [redacted] over the longer term we require also an improvement in Arab-Israeli relations and a lessening of the hostility of Arab nationalists to cooperation with the West. Our plans for technical assistance and economic and military aid are also parts of the picture but again no one project will bring about the desired cooperative atmosphere. Nor is it likely that the expenditure of money alone will remove hostility and inspire confidence.

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Accordingly, a consideration of the establishment of the MEC is a function of the larger problem of orienting the Arab States toward the West. In this broad picture there is a strong similarity if not an identity between the attitudes of the Middle Eastern states and those of South and Southeast Asia. On all these fronts we are confronted with the familiar problem of nationalism and hostility to "colonialism."

A current NSC staff paper (No. 129 of April 1, 1952), which will shortly come before the NSC for action, stresses anti-Western Nationalism as one of the current dangers in the area. It calls for the United States playing a larger role in facilitating political settlements between the states of the area and the Western nations. It says: "The United States should seek to create an atmosphere which will facilitate obtaining base rights where required within the area." Among the recommended "means of diminishing the threat

posed by

posed by nationalistic demands for the elimination of Western interests and by political instability in the area," is "the fullest practicable use of psychological and political programs... to influence the process of political change into channels that will effect the least compromise of Western interests..." These programs should "support or develop those leadership groups in the area which offer the greatest prospect of establishing political stability oriented toward the free world."

I do not see how such a policy can be carried out unless the broad problem referred to above is constantly kept in mind by the Department as a whole whenever an aspect of it comes to a head, not only in the area itself but anywhere in the Asian-Arab-African world.

In facing this problem we have always been torn by the apparently conflicting interests of our European friends on the one hand and those of the Middle Eastern and Asian states on the other. We faced this conflict in the Indonesian case and at least for a time aroused Dutch resentment by our support of the Indonesian cause. In retrospect, I believe our policy in that case was wise and that many Dutch leaders have, even though reluctantly, come to share that view. We have met the same problem in Indochina where for several years we have urged the French to move in the direction of a more liberal policy in their dealings with the Associated States. Although the French have moved a long way, that problem still claims our attention. In a more general way we have tried from time to time through public statements to show the fundamental sympathy of the United States for nationalist aspirations. A number of your public addresses and some of the President's have dealt with this theme. A notable recent example is your address at the Roosevelt Day Dinner on January 25, 1952, on the Point Four Program.

Wherever it arises, the solution of the problem calls for balance and a conciliation of conflicting interests and points of view. In each specific case where the problem arises, we have to consider how far we can press our European friends without creating in their governments and in their public opinion an insurmountable resistance to our suggestions. It usually appears that among the individual officials concerned in the European governments there are some who share our appreciation of the need for a progressive policy in dealing with dependent or "backward" peoples and others who are still deeply rooted in an old tradition from which it is difficult for them to escape. At the same time in all of these cases we are forced to consider the effect of United States action upon the leaders and the public opinion of the Arab and Asian states.

It is also

It is also a familiar aspect of this problem that Soviet Communist propaganda, with its complete irresponsibility, plays heavily upon the nationalist aspirations of these latter countries.

Aside from specific problems such as those of Indonesia, Indochina, Morroco, Tunisia and Egypt, the problem arises periodically in the United Nations in terms of the positions taken by the United States representatives in the Trusteeship Council and in committees of the General Assembly dealing with the problems of dependent areas. We have from time to time talked over this basic problem with the British and with other so-called colonial powers. While these talks have probably been helpful, they have not and indeed could not have served to provide any ready formula for the solution of particular difficulties as they arise.

The latest case in point is the Tunisian question and the position taken by the United States in the Security Council. The instructions issued to USUN to abstain on the question of putting this issue on the agenda were generally known before the meeting of the Security Council on April 4. This resulted in an especially bitter speech by Bokhari, the Pakistan Delegate and President of the Security Council. The recent activity of Pakistan in the direction of providing leadership to the Moslem states of the Middle East gives particular significance to this Pakistan statement in terms of the problem of the MEC. While Pakistan is not included among the states originally approached in connection with the MEC, it has been contemplated that the cooperation of Pakistan would be helpful. I do not believe it is an exaggeration to say that our position on the Tunisian case constitutes a set back to our efforts to build the essential cooperative attitude in the area.

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It is perhaps possible that at least the statement which our representative in the Security Council will make in explaining the United States vote could be strengthened by some language which would give more comfort to the Arab-Asian group. Perhaps conversations with Bokhari could lead to a further postponement of the next meeting of the Security Council.

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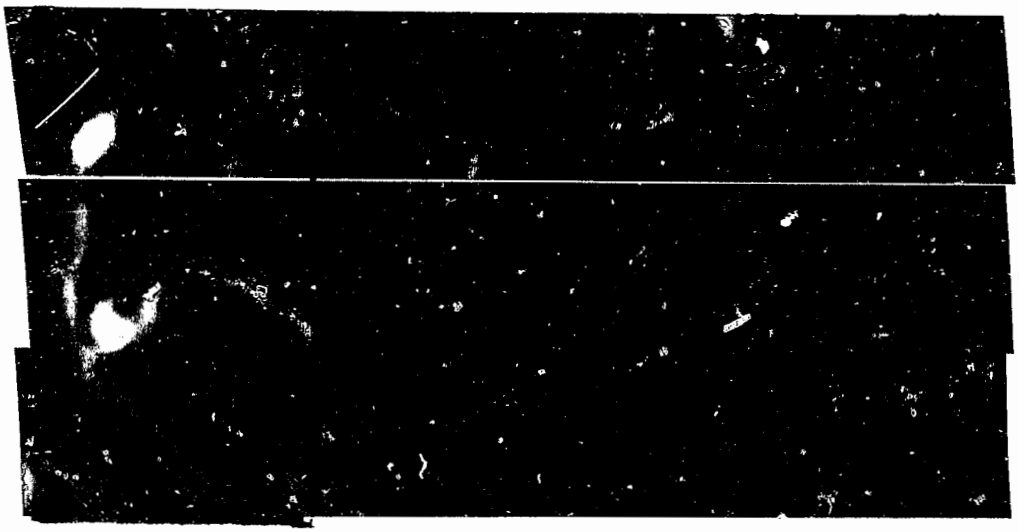
[redacted]



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I suggest that consideration should also be given to the possible value of frank conversations with leaders of the Arab-Asian group in which the necessity of balancing conflicting interests and our own sympathetic understanding of the problems of both our Arab-Asian and our European friends would be laid on the table. One difficulty in planning such conversations would be the selection of appropriate representatives with whom to talk in this vein.

Philip C. Jessup
Ambassador at Large

Copies to:
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S/A PCJ:eva